



SUBMISSION TO THE

NUNAVUT WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT BOARD

FOR

Information: X

Decision:

ISSUE: The Work of the DOE Wildlife Deterrent Specialist

BACKGROUND

In recent years, a number of factors have emphasized the need for focused effort in minimizing wildlife-human conflict in the territory. Increases in the number of human-wildlife conflict incidents (polar bear and grizzly bear encounters, in particular), and growing communities with increasing amounts of wildlife attractants are among those factors. In order to adequately address the issues regarding wildlife-human conflict in Nunavut, the Department created a new, full-time Wildlife Deterrent Specialist position.

Primary goals of the Wildlife Deterrent Specialist are to:

- Develop community based approaches to minimizing human-bear interactions and guide appropriate responses to bear conflicts.
- Increase public awareness of bear safety and how to minimize conflicts
- Improve the availability of deterrents to Nunavummiut
- Monitor problem bear activity and research causes and solutions

CURRENT STATUS

The position of Wildlife Deterrent Specialist has been filled since September 2008. Since this was a new position within the department, much of the first year was occupied with data gathering, identifying and working with high conflict communities, re-working and translating a community bear management plan template to better fit Nunavut communities and culture, and identifying internal department requirements to better respond and report human/wildlife conflicts.

In relation to specific goals:

- Community Bear Plans have been initiated in 10 of 25 communities (Resolute Bay, Arviat, Qikiqtarjuaq, Pond Inlet, Clyde River, Igloolik, Hall Beach, Rankin Inlet, Whale Cove, and Chesterfield Inlet). Remaining communities to be completed by 2011
- A series of 4 public-awareness posters on bear safety was produced in Inuktitut, English, Inuinnaqtun and French
- Pilot bear safety workshops were held in Igloolik, Kimmirut, Arviat, and Rankin Inlet
- Information packages on detection & deterrent equipment and other safe camping and property protection are being developed for Wildlife offices and HTO offices
- Testing of equipment to complement traditional activities (etc. electric fences, detection systems, deterrents) was completed
- A new Wildlife Damage Prevention Program was developed, which aims to make wildlife deterrent resources available to Nunavummiut
- A new compensation program was developed, which encourages proactive approaches to reduce human-wildlife conflict
- Ongoing data collection and reporting on human– wildlife conflicts in Nunavut has enabled tracking and monitoring of conflict incidence.

Obstacles to further success with the Wildlife Deterrence Program:

1. Reporting. Not all cases of polar bear human conflict are reported to officers. In some instances bears that are killed in conflict with people are only recorded as regular kills. This results in the data indicating a lower trend in polar bear conflict than what is actually experienced. Also, experiences at camps when bears are not killed may not be reported (or recorded).
2. Different levels of collaboration between Conservation Officers, HTOs and community. Poor communication and vacancies in Conservation Officer positions can influence the response effort, data sharing, and success of community bear management plans.
3. Traditionally, bears entering living areas were often opportunistically harvested (meeting with Elders, Iqaluit 2010). Current management system of quotas frequently prevents this alternative but a recent survey indicates many Inuit would prefer to take this action (Kotierk 2010).
4. Reduced or limited quotas have in some cases created an unreceptive environment in which to promote non-lethal alternatives to conflicts.